COMIC SHOP NEWS™

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COMICS IN THE MOVIES

Casper ™ & ©1995 Universal Studios & Amblin Entertainment. Batman Forever ™ & ©1995 DC Comics, Judge Dredd ™ & ©1995 Hollywood Pictures, ARR.

Tank Girl Blasts a Path for Comic Book Invasion of Theaters

Tank Girl, the British comic book-based United Artists film starring Lori Petty and Malcolm McDowell,, may not have blasted to the top of the ticket tallies with its $2.1 million sales for its opening weekend, but it's only the first of several major motion pictures slated for release in the next couple of months. ***Tank Girl*** can be found in the comic shops as well, courtesy of two trade paperbacks from Dark Horse, a movie adaptation from Vertigo/DC, a series of trading cards from Comic Images, and an upcoming original Vertigo/DC miniseries, ***Tank Girl: The Odyssey***.

Coming up in early summer is Amblin Entertainment and Universal Studios' ***Casper,*** the live-action (you read it correctly!) film about the friendly ghost and his not-so-friendly fellow spirits. The human stars of this film are going to have to settle for second billing, because the real attraction for this big-budget film is the state-of-the-art ghostly effects that allow Casper and crew to keep their comic book look and still fit in with the live action sequences. To help pave the way for the release of the film, Fleer is producing a high-quality foil-stamped trading card series of ***Fleer Ultra 1995 Casper Trading Cards,*** and new ***Casper*** comics are in the work.

Of course, the biggest blockbuster of the year is ***Batman Forever***, the all-star Batman film featuring Val Kilmer, Nicole Kidman, Jim Carrey, Tommy Lee Jones, Chris O'Donnell, and Drew Barrymore. This film, slated for June 16th release (although it's likely that there'll be many June 15th preview showings), pits Batman against the dual villainy of the Riddler and Two-Face—and it introduces Robin to the Batman film mythos at last. To commemorate the film, DC has a movie adaptation in the works, as well as special one-shots featuring the Riddler and Two-Face. Additionally, Fleer is preparing two series of ***Batman Forever*** trading cards: the ***Fleer Batman Forever Metal Card Series*** will feature illustrations inspired by the film, while the ***Fleer Ultra 1995 Batman Forever Trading Card Series*** will feature high-quality photo reproductions from the film. Look for these items to be the opening wave of a flood of Batman-related publications and licensing tie-ins in.

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And then there's one more film that no one's dreading: ***Judge Dredd.*** Sylvester Stallone stars in this film based on the British comic book series that has recently found an American home at DC. When the Cinergi Pictures production debuts in June, DC will be ready with their 64-page ***Judge Dredd*** movie adaptation—and of course, the regular ***Judge Dredd*** and ***Judge Dredd—Legends of the Law*** series will continue on a monthly basis. Fans can also keep an eye out for the ***Judge Dredd—The Epics*** trading card series featuring classic Dredd artwork.

And there's one other major summer release that, while not comic book inspired, is certainly of interest to comic book fans: ***Species,*** an MGM release whose stunning visuals are designed by acclaimed illustrator H.R. Giger. This July-release film is already generating tremendous word of mouth because of its stunning visuals; Giger fans who thought he could never surpass his work on ***Alien*** might have to reconsider! Not only is Dark Horse producing a two-issue adaptation of the film (the first issue of which will ship in late June, almost a month before the release of the film), but Comic Images is also producing a photo-reproduction ***Species Trading Card Series*** that should be available just before the film hits.

And if you think that's all of the comic book inspired films in the works, think again: in production for release in future months are such films as ***Barb Wire, X, The Mask II, TimeCop II, Incredible Hulk, Prophet, Virus, Zorro, Spawn, Doom's IV***... Heck, at this rate, maybe comic shops should just install a screening room in the back of the store!

by KIM B. PEARSON

Egypt Tut-ankhamenly Good

The Egyptian culture, one of the oldest civilizations on Earth, has inspired both awe and curiosity. But for Vincent Me, Egypt offers, in an indirect way, an escape from a failed life of amoral desires and failed plans.

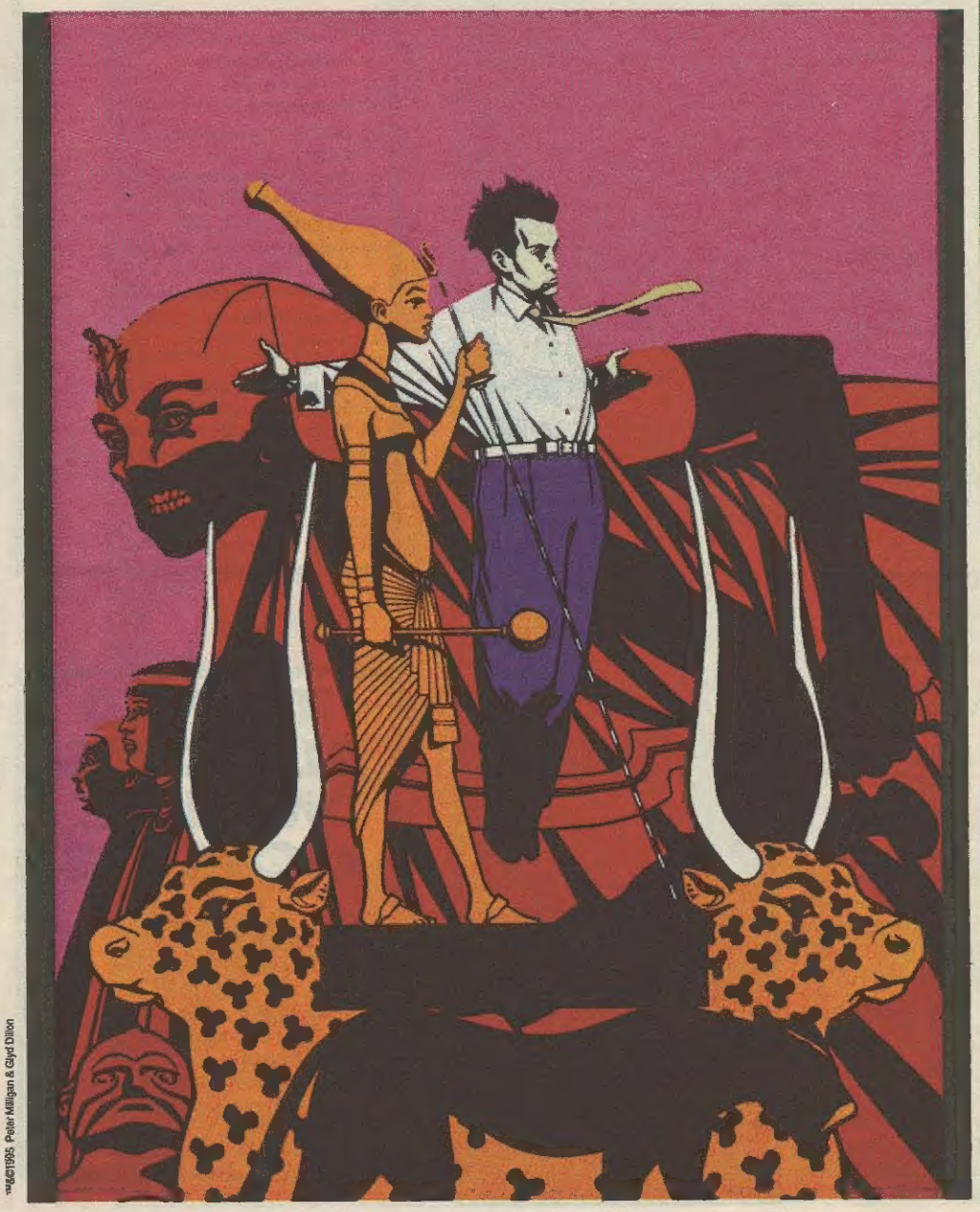
For most of his life, Vincent has used others for his own goals; now a group of jaded college students hope to use him to carry out their own scheme. These students, fascinated by the complex society of ancient Egypt, hope to recreate the pharaoh ritual of rebirth—and they intend to use Vincent as the subject of their experiment. After all, who would miss him if he were gone?...

The experiment does indeed go wrong... but not in the way that anyone anticipated. When Vincent awakens, he finds himself far removed from his old world of womanizing and scheming; instead, he seems to have been transported back to ancient Egypt. He soon comes to realize, though, that this isn't the ancient Egypt of history; instead, it's the ancient Egypt of fantasy, where magic exists and Horus, Osiris, and the other Egyptian gods still walk the Earth.

Egypt is the story of Vincent's struggle to discover what has happened to him—and what he must do to return to the familiar world that now seems very, very far away. Having been reborn once into this world, Vincent soon experiences another rebirth, and yet another. Can he find out the secret of this strange world before his lives run out?

Egypt, a seven-issue Vertigo limited series written by Peter Milligan and illustrated by Glyn Dillon, follows one man's attempts to discover the secrets behind the strange world in which he finds himself... and along the way, he makes some revealing discoveries about himself. ***Egypt #1,*** a $2.50 comic, is scheduled for June 29th release.

by ALEX KIRKLAND



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COMIC SHOP NEWS™
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From Your Friendly Neighborhood Comics Outlet
Printed on Recycled Newsprint

CSNsider

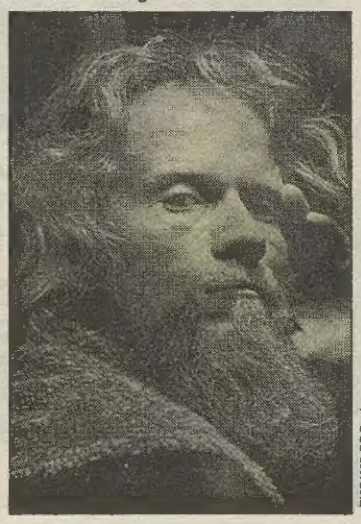
Tristar Productions has optioned *Rob Liefeld's* ***Prophet*** for film production... Marvel plans to offer 99¢ loss-leader titles within each of its families of books (Spider-Man, X-Men, Marvel Edge, 2099, etc.)... The Shadow and Doc Savage cross paths in a new miniseries from Dark Horse; look for it in mid-summer... Superman action figures from Kenner this year? Could be!... Look for more changes in the Marvel-Ultraverse relationship in the aftermath of the upcoming ***Avengers-Ultraforce*** crossover... Due to production problems, *Paul Jenkins & Leo Duranona's* ***Construct*** has been delayed by Mirage Press; look for the book to be rescheduled later this summer... Those of you who missed out don't fret: Image will offer special sets of all thirteen ***Gen 13 #1*** cover variations in June... Over the next few months, the Ultraverse family of books will be tightened, with a few series being recast as miniseries instead... Wildstorm Studios is offering an ultra-limited-edition hardcover version of the ***Gen 13*** monthly series; each of the 1000 copies will be signed by creator *J. Scott Campbell*... Tekno-Comix has created a new company, Tekno-Toys, to produce toys based on various Tekno-Comix characters... *David Lynch* is producing a documentary on acclaimed cartoonist *Robert Crumb*... This summer, FPG is producing a collectible card game, ***Guardians,*** designed by *Keith Parkinson* and Luke Peterschmidt, and featuring art by *Parkinson, Mike Ploog, Brom, Don Maitz,* and *James Warhola*... The release date for Decipher's ***Star Wars Collectible Card Game*** has been set for August... And Cardz is producing its own collectible card game, ***Hyborian Gates,*** with art by *Boris Vallejo* and *Julie Bell*... In addition to its $3.95 bargain-priced collection reprinting ***X-Files #s 1-3,*** Topps is also producing an ***X-Files Annual*** later this summer—and yes indeed, ***X-Files Trading Cards*** are on the way!

Adventurer Ends, But Adventure Doesn't

Begin saying your farewells to ***Conan The Adventurer,*** because this short-lived series is coming to an end after its fourteenth issue, slated for May release. *Roy Thomas, Rafael Kayanan,* and *John Floyd* send the title off with another marvelous story depicting the young Conan's formative experiences. This isn't only the end of Conan the Adventurer, though; the long-lived ***Savage Sword of Conan*** magazine is also saying farewell in May with a *Roy Thomas-John Buscema* finale. This isn't the end of all Conan projects from Marvel, though; in June, the company plans to relaunch *Robert E. Howard's* hero in an all-new ongoing series simply entitled ***Conan. Conan the Adventurer #14,*** a May 18th release, is priced at $1.50; ***Savage Sword of Conan #235***, a $2.25 magazine, is scheduled for May 25th release.

Chiaroscuro Brings Leonardo's Life Out of the Shadows

Leonardo. Michelangelo. Machiavelli. Borgia. These names are familiar to anyone who has ever studied the Renaissance—but for the most part, they remain little more than names. In ***Chiaroscuro,*** however, the personalities behind the names are evidenced in a compelling storyline that focuses on some of the most creative minds in history and the turbulent times in which they lived.



Chiaroscuro, a ten-issue Vertigo limited series by *Dave Rawson, Pat McGreal, Chas Truog,* and *Rafael Kayanan,* focuses o the life of Leonardo da Vinci as seen through the eyes of his beguilingly amoral companion. Michelangelo, Cesare Borgia, and the young woman who the world will come to know as Mona Lisa are all players in this intricately-woven drama. By the time this series is completed, readers will never again think of these historic figures as faceless names.

To ensure that this series stands out on the comic racks, Vertigo is utilizing photo covers by *Stephen John Phillips* and *Richard Bruning* rather than more traditionally illustrated covers. ***Chiaroscuro: The Private Lives of Leonardo da Vinci #1,*** a $2.50 comic intended for mature readers, is scheduled for May 25th release.

CSN CHARTS

TOP 50 COMICS

CSN's Top Seller charts are based on figures supplied by the two major distributors, Diamond Distribution and Capital City Distribution, as well as figures by a cross-section of comics speciality shops. The distributor's figures represent retailer orders placed on the titles, while the information from stores represents copies sold.

1. Mutants: Amazing X-Men 3
2. Mutants: Astonishing X-Men 3
3. Weapon X 3
4. Mutants: Generation Next 3
5. Gambit & the X-Ternals 3
6. Superman 100
7. Factor-X 3
8. X-Man 3
9. X-Calibre 3
10. Spawn 29
11. X-Universe 1
12. Adventures of Superman 523
13. Gen 13 1
14. X-Files 2
15. X-Files 3
16. Superman: Man of Steel 44
17. Amazing Spider-Man 401
18. Wild CATs 18
19. Batman 518
20. Ice Age—A Magic: The Gathering Miniseries 1
21. Detective Comics 685
22. Chapel 1
23. Batman: Shadow of the Bat 38
24. Magic: The Gathering—The Shadow Mage 1
25. Spider-Man 58
26. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 71
27. Cyberforce 11
28. Azrael 4
29. Cyberforce Annual 1
30. Fantastic Four 400
31. Catwoman 20
32. Wetworks 6
33. Star Wars: Dark Empire II 4
34. Knightmare Tales 1
35. Spectacular Spider-Man 224
36. Web of Spider-Man 124
37. Incredible Hulk 429
38. Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Dark Lords of the Sith 6
39. Aliens Vs. Predator: Duel 1
40. Green Lantern 62
41. X-Men 2099 AD 20
42. Prophet 10
43. Flash 101
44. Spider-Man Unlimited 9
45. Venom: Carnage Unleashed 2
46. Vengeance of Vampirella 12
47. Superboy 15
48. Fury of SHIELD 1
49. Mask 2
50. Solar, Man of the Atom 46

TOP DOLLAR COMICS

The following comics, graphic novels and trade paperbacks were given Top Dollar ratings based on the dollar volume of the copies sold (or are expected to sell) during the late April and May sales period.

1. Superman 100
2. X-Universe 1
3. Mutants: Amazing X-Men 3
4. Mutants: Astonishing X-Men 3
5. Gen 13 1
6. Weapon X 3
7. Mutants: Generation Next 3
8. X-Files 2
9. X-Files 3
10. Gambit & the X-Ternals 3
11. WildCATs 18
12. Fantastic Four 400
13. Factor-X 3
14. X-Man 3
15. X-Calibre 3
16. Ice Age—A Magic: The Gathering Miniseries 1
17. Spawn 29
18. Chapel 1
19. Magic: The Gathering—The Shadow Mage 1
20. Cyberforce Annual 1
21. Spider-Man Unlimited 1
22. Cyberforce 11
23. Adventures of Superman 523
24. Batman: Shadow of the Bat 38
25. Star Wars: Dark Empire II 4
26. Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Dark Lords of the Sith 6
27. Fury of SHIELD 1
28. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 71
29. Wetworks 6
30. Spider-Man 58
31. Knightmare Tales 1
32. Azrael 4
33. Superman: Man of Steel 44
34. Amazing Spider-Man 401
35. Venom: Carnage Unleashed 2
36. Aliens Vs. Predator: Duel 1
37. Batman 518
38. Happy Birthday Martha Washington 1
39. Prophet 10
40. Vengeance of Vampirella 12
41. Detective Comics 685
42. Mask 2
43. Solar, Man of the Atom 26
44. Sin City: The Big Fat Kill 5
45. Incredible Hulk 429
46. 2099 AD 1
47. Doom 2099 AD 29
48. Nexus: Wages of Sin 1
49. Catwoman 20
50. Spectacular Spider-Man 224

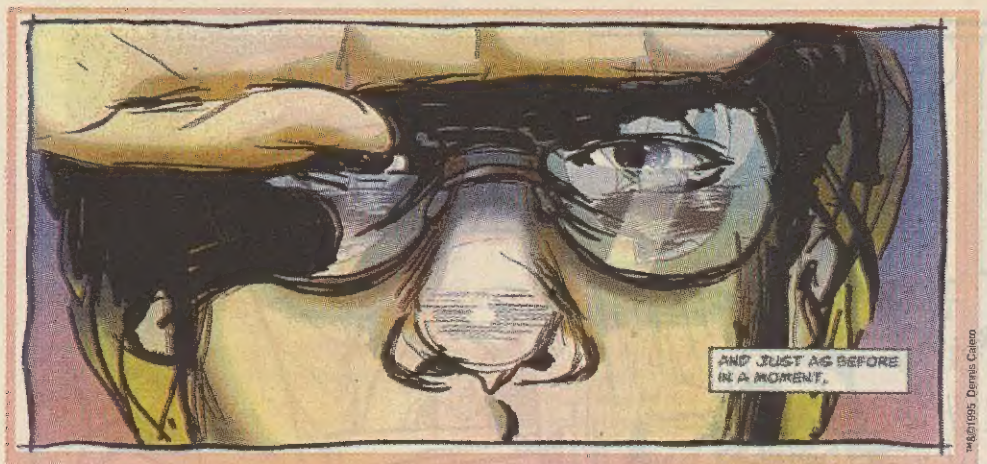
TOP 10 BLACK & WHITE COMICS

1. Sin City: The Big Fat Kill 5
2. Kabuki: circle of Blood 2
3. Cerebus 192
4. Ranma 1/2 Part IV 2
5. Domu: A Child's Dream 1
6. Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan: The Lost Adventure 3
7. Oh My Goddess Vol 2 2
8. Return of Lum Ususei Yatsura 4
9. Oz 5
10. Savage Sword of Conan 233

TOP TEN NON-COMICS

The Top Ten Non-Comics is based on number and not dollar value. This category includes graphic novels, hardcovers, trade paperbacks, portfolios, etc. It includes books that actually were on sale during the April sales period.

1. Marvel Metal Trading Cards
2. Magic the Gathering Booster Packs
3. Magic: The Gathering: Fallen Empires
4. Adventures of Batman & Robin Trading Cards Series II
5. Fleer Flair Marvel '95 Trading Cards
6. Blood Wars Starter Sets
7. Blood Wars Escalation Set One
8. Wizard 45
9. Hero Illustrated 22
10. Tank Girl Trading Cards



Sun and a Beach

Summer inevitably means swimsuits—and in the comic shops, it means swimsuit specials. ***Sports Illustrated*** kicked off this trend many years ago, but in more recent times, comics publishers have been more than willing to meet the demand for comics depicting favorite characters in a variety of swimsuits. This summer, Allied Press has found a way to meet that demand and help a worthy cause at the same time: their ***Small Press Swimsuit Spectacular*** is not only a 36-page comic featuring pin-ups from a variety of alternative comics creators, it's also a fund-raiser, because 100% of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the American Cancer Society. Contributors to this all-star book include *Terry Moore* (***Strangers in Paradise***), *Teri Wood* (***Wandering Star***), *Don Simpson* (***Bizarre Heroes***), *Evan Dorkin* (***Milk & Cheese***), *Colleen Doran* (***A Distant Soil***), *Bart Sears* (***Brute & Babe***), and *Joe Staton* (***E-Man***). ***The Small Press Swimsuit Spectacular***, a $2.95 comic, is scheduled for June release.

The Comic With the Sting In Its Tale

Sting has won a heaping helping of musical awards during his career as lead singer of the Police and for his subsequent solo endeavors. Sting migrates from one medium to another later this spring, though, when ***Tales From the Edge #7*** presents a comic book interpretation of Sting's song "The Wild Wild Sea." *Dennis Calero* is interpreting the story visually, initially illustrating it in pen and ink and then scanning the artwork so that it can be fully painted on the Macintosh using the versatile Adobe Photoshop program. This adaptation is the first time that ***Tales From the Edge*** has adapted lyrics to comics, but editor *J. David Spurlock* is hoping that it won't be the last. "I've always been interested in combining rock music with graphic storytelling," Spurlock said. "It just seems like a natural to me." Continuing the music theme, this issue will also feature a ten-page preview of *George Pratt*'s upcoming blues graphic novel that will be the subject of a Sony Video documentary. ***Tales From the Edge #7*** is slated for early June release.

In God They Trust

Fantasy literature has always had an affinity for the hero born. From King Arthur to Luke Skywalker, these naive heroes who rise to their birthright have been the subject of legend, poetry, and novels for centuries. This summer, Slave Labor Graphics and Zander Cannon are adding their own hero to this list with ***The Replacement God,*** a wondrous fantasy series whose character-driven storylines are sure to appeal to fantasy readers as well as to fans of series like ***Elfquest, Cerebus,*** and ***Starchild***.

The Replacement God is the story of a young boy who is the focus of an ancient prophecy: according to the legend, he will replace a dying god and bring an end to the tyranny of a cruel king. The young boy is unaware of the prophecies or his role in them, however, so he has no idea why members of the king's Death Horde are eager to end his life—or why enemies of the king are so determined to protect him at any cost. ***The Replacement God #1***, a $2.95 comic, is scheduled for June release; subsequent issues will follow on a quarterly basis.

Looking for something to read? Tired of comic book disappointments? Well, Cliff Biggers and Brett Brooks are here to help out. Each month, Cliff (in plain type) and Brett *(in italic type)* take a look at a few choice comic books scheduled for release in the next few weeks. Our intent here isn't to produce "killer reviews" or to skewer disappointing comics; instead, we sort through the dozens of review copies we receive each month and pick out the books that deserve some attention, helping you to make educated choices of reading material.

Publishers interested in having their books considered for review in this area should send copies to *CSN* Give & Take, 2339 Milstead Circle, Marietta GA 30066. We'd prefer receiving copies of the books at least thirty days prior to their scheduled release date.

At the end of the reviews, we also offer a one to five rating for each book, with both Brett's and Cliff's ratings listed. Since we make a point to only devote space to books that we think deserve attention, this will enable readers to determine just how much Brett and Cliff like each book. Here's the scale:

★	Pick it up only if you need something to read; it's worth the ticket price
★★	Entertaining, but at times predictable
★★★	Good stuff, worth a close look
★★★★	Primo reading; don't pass it up
★★★★★	You don't find comics better than this; *creme de la creme*

DEATH BY GAS HAS A LONG AND HONORABLE HISTORY.
THE GERMANS INTRODUCED GAS WARFARE IN 1915, AND IT WAS THE HIT OF WORLD WAR I.
PRETTY SOON EVERYBODY WAS KILLING WITH GAS.
™&©1995 Paradox Press

The Big Book of Death

The first time I had the pleasure of crossing paths with Paradox Press' Big Books was just over a year ago; at the time, the entire Paradox line was still months away, but editor Andy Helfer already had samples ready from the first few Big Books. It was *The Big Book of Death* that I flipped to first, out of a sort of morbid curiosity—and within a dozen pages, I knew that the Big Book format was perhaps the most clever comic-format concept to come down the pike in a decade.

The Big Books work best when their material is eccentric, offbeat, irreverent... these aren't polite, subdued comics. They're loud, they're pushy, they're in your face—and they're driven by a sense of humor that, even in the most serious segments, never fails to communicate the sardonic smile (or is that a death rictus?) that seems to be a vital part of every Big Book.

***The Big Book of Death* is likely to duplicate the phenomenal success of the first offering, The Big Book of Urban Legends; as far as I'm concerned, this one works even better because it's a little more disturbing, a little more bold, and its subject matter is a little more disquieting. Big Books should be disturbing—and in his willingness to touch on deathly subjects that most would avoid, writer Bronwyn Carlton's frankness is most effective. Execution, autopsies, cemeteries, spontaneous combustion, cryogenics, and other serious segments are accompanied by such little gems as the deadly concepts reflected in common nursery rhymes.**

The main reason that I see The Big Book of Death capturing audiences is the basic nature of the subject. Everyone has had, or will have, some sort of an experience with death. It's an inevitability. You can't escape it, so why not laugh about it? Their quirky nature of the volume only adds to the ability to look and laugh. You don't want a serious subject and a serious handling of the subject to be filled with jokes, so they make it silly at times. Simple genius.

So far, I've had a chance to read about a quarter of this volume; I already know that the minute this book is released, perusing the remaining pages will

Hilly Rose's Space Adventures #1

Union #3

Superman & Batman Magazine #8

CHAPTER 2
THE FLASH MUSEUM! I NEVER GET TIRED OF COMING HERE...
...'SPECIALLY SINCE THEY ADDED THAT BIG, FULL-COLOR STATUE OF ME IN COSTUME.
IT'S AN HONOR TO BE REPRESENTED HERE. I'M JUST THE THIRD MAN IN HISTORY -- AFTER JAY GARRICK AND BARRY ALLEN -- TO WEAR THE LIGHTNING BOLT OF THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE!
™&©1995 DC Comics

be my number one reading priority. Unlike ***The Big Book of Weirdos,*** a volume I was willing to sample and savor over a week or so, this one is going to be consumed, mentally devoured at one sitting.

In the past decade and a half, DC comics has done a lot to expand the comic book industry with such projects as ***The Watchmen, The Dark Knight Returns,*** and the Vertigo line—but no DC project has ever shown the potential to thoroughly entertain a diverse group of readers the way The Big Books do. If you ever had any doubts about the appeal of the comic book medium to non-fans, just put one of these volumes in the hands of a casual reader; almost immediately, you'll discover that the general public is perfectly willing to accept the comics format if the subject and the tone is right.

The Big Book of Death
Cliff: ★★★★★
Brett: ★★★★

There are two things that look to be re-launched so-to-speak in April. First, Dark Horse will reintroduce the world to ***Ghost****; and secondly, Dark Horse will reintroduce the world to the artistic talents of Adam Hughes.*

Ghost*, as some of you might remember, was one of the characters that was introduced in the Arcadia story arc of the Comics Greatest World launch a couple of years ago.* ***Ghost*** *was one of the most popular characters, and one that Dark Horse said would be getting her own series, once the time was right. Well, the time is right, and the book is right.*

Ghost *is the story of a dead woman. That might seem a little obvious to some, but in the world of comic book superheroes, it wouldn't seem odd to have a character named Ghost who wasn't dead. In fact, I consider it much more unusual that this is a story about a person hat has died, than it would be to have happened the other way. What more can I tell you about this woman, well, not much. In fact, she doesn't know much about herself, either. Most of what she is doing on this world is trying to find out why she is here, and who she used to be. She knows that her name is Eliza, and that she has a sister named Margo, and a couple of parents—she found out about all this in the* ***Ghost*** *special from a few months back—but she doesn't really remember any of it. She has been told all of this information. The only thing that Ghost does know is that she is very angry, and very dangerous.*

In a way, Ghost is an intriguing variation of the superb Deadman series from the a quarter century ago; In both cases, the character doesn't know why he/she was killed, and the character is determined to find his/her killers while at the same time protecting his/her family. But ***Ghost*** seems to focus less on the occult aspects and more on action...

Ghost *is a very well crafted superhero style story. The title character is very engrossing, with a personality that you love, despite how ill mannered she can be at times. Writer Erik Luke is able to craft a tale that puts you in the position of trying to figure out what is happening along with Ghost. You know what she knows—with a little more confidence than she does, in fact—but you still want to find the answers.* ***Ghost*** *moves along with the speed of an adventure tale, and the intrigue of a mystery, keeping the reader searching for some glimpse of a clue that Ghost might be missing.*

Luke paces his story quite well; he realizes that this quest is a major part of Ghost's existence, so he doesn't rush it or underplay it.

On top of all that, there is the art of Adam Hughes. Adam has been sadly missing from mainstream comics on a regular basis for far too long. ***Ghost*** *marks his return to a regular ongoing series, and he has never looked better. Of course, it doesn't hurt that Mark Farmer has joined him as the inker on the book. Hughes and Farmer are a dream team and a half. If every comic looked like this...well, as long as I'm dreaming I might as well wish for peace on Earth. Hughes gives the book a rich, lush look that seems to capture the ethereal nature of the character. His combination of classic comic art and art nouveau design gives the book a very dynamic appearance, without being overpowering. This is one of the most attractive comics I've seen in years.*

Adam Hughes really seems to have returned to the more detailed linework that made his reputation in the beginning; he's serious about his art in this book, and it shows.

Overall, I don't think that many people will be upset when they read ***Ghost****. Dark Horse was off to a good start when they released* ***Agents of Law****, but* ***Ghost*** *is the best thing they've published in their superhero line to date.*

Ghost #1
Cliff: ★★★
Brett: ★★★★

Comic books deal almost incessantly with heroes but in ***Bulletproof,*** Joe Zabel and Gary Dumm offer a look at the dark side of heroism: a man whose desire for respect leads him to fake a shooting in order to prove how dangerous his job truly is. In a world where husbands fake the murder of their own wives and mothers lie about the disappearance of their own children, Jeff McIntire's scheme seems almost innocent—and at the same time, the story points out the deceit and dishonesty that's at the heart of even the most apparently honest and devoted person.

Bulletproof, which is inspired by a real incident, tells the story of two security guards who hope to draw attention to the danger of their job by staging a shooting; even though the target was wearing a bulletproof vest that made the fraudulent assault only minimally risky, the two guards were certain that the potential deadliness of a shooting would bring them more respect and, perhaps, most authority.

On one level, ***Bulletproof*** is a relatively minor crime drama; but what makes it work for me is that the story points out the complex motivations that drive so many people in unappreciated, low-esteem jobs. Dismissed as "rent-a-cops" and police-wannabees, security guards are seen as the lowest end of law enforcement. Their desire to prove their merit leads them to violate the trust that the public puts in every law enforcement official, from security guard on up.

Maybe that dichotomy is the essence of the story: we set such high standards for those who perform important jobs, yet we often juxtapose those expectations with mediocre pay and little respect. Jeff McIntire's crime seems relatively innocent; its effect on both his family and the innocent man who is blamed for the fraudulent shooting proves that there are often victims of seemingly innocent crimes.

The most appealing thing in the story to me was the obvious fact that the man was not a criminal. He truly thought that he was doing the right thing, and the what he was doing would help others. He had no idea the problems that he was creating, or the pain that he might bring about. He was acting in good faith, fighting through his own personal fear, to try and accomplish something that he saw as worthwhile. The take of this character is what made the story. How a man can see something that others would perceive as dangerous and deceitful as being good.

It's true; there are no villains in this story, really; instead, there are just characters whose plans get out of control. The characters in this book are very believable people.

Zabel and Dumm have worked with Harvey Pekar on ***American Splendor;*** perhaps that experience with slice of life comics is the reason they're so adept and bringing complexity to the relatively mundane characters who populate ***Bulletproof.*** Their skill at showing the complexity that underscores the mundanity makes this one-shot effective—and the universality of these characters' motivations is disturbing.

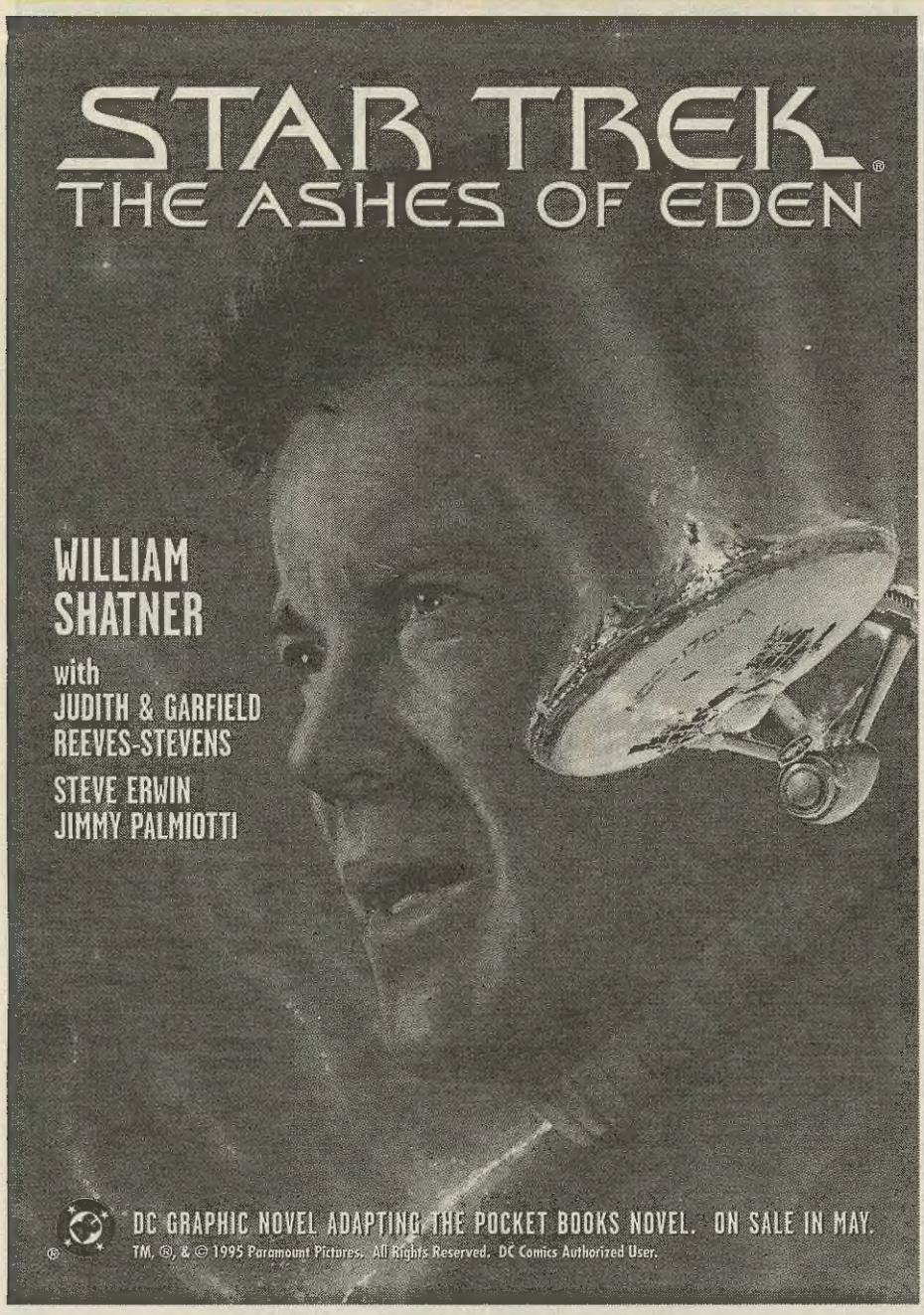
Bulletproof #1
Cliff: ★★★
Brett: ★★

It is unlikely that most people are going to remember ***The Masked Man.*** ***The Masked Man*** *was a pulp-style comic that was about...well, a guy who fought crime wearing a mask. It was very reminiscent of the classic Will Eisner* ***Spirit*** *comic, and it came from the talented mind of B.C. Boyer. Boyer has returned to comics, and this time he has brought with him a young woman named Hilly Rose.*

Hilly Rose's Space Adventures *is the new series that takes us off the planet Earth, and into the fun-filled world of Hilly Rose, space reporter. Boyer once again reaches back to the era of pulp-style adventure, and combines it with modern pastiche humor to bring us a very entertaining new title. Hilly Rose is a woman who is just coming of age. She is being recognized as a budding great reporter by the media, the public, and rival newspapers—just about everybody but her father. Her father doesn't think that Hilly has what it takes to be a great reporter, but he wants her to be one anyway, and he is willing to do anything to achieve that goal.*

There's a slightly naive enthusiasm that makes Hilly Rose an instantly likeable character—and since my father has been in the newspaper business as a reporter and an editor almost as long as I've been alive, the reporter angle is a plus for me, too.

This comic evokes so many different feelings that it is difficult to summarize. There are times when it seems like an adventure with Buck Rogers, and other times when it seems like a slapstick comedy/parody, and there are times when it reminded me of the gentle warmth of a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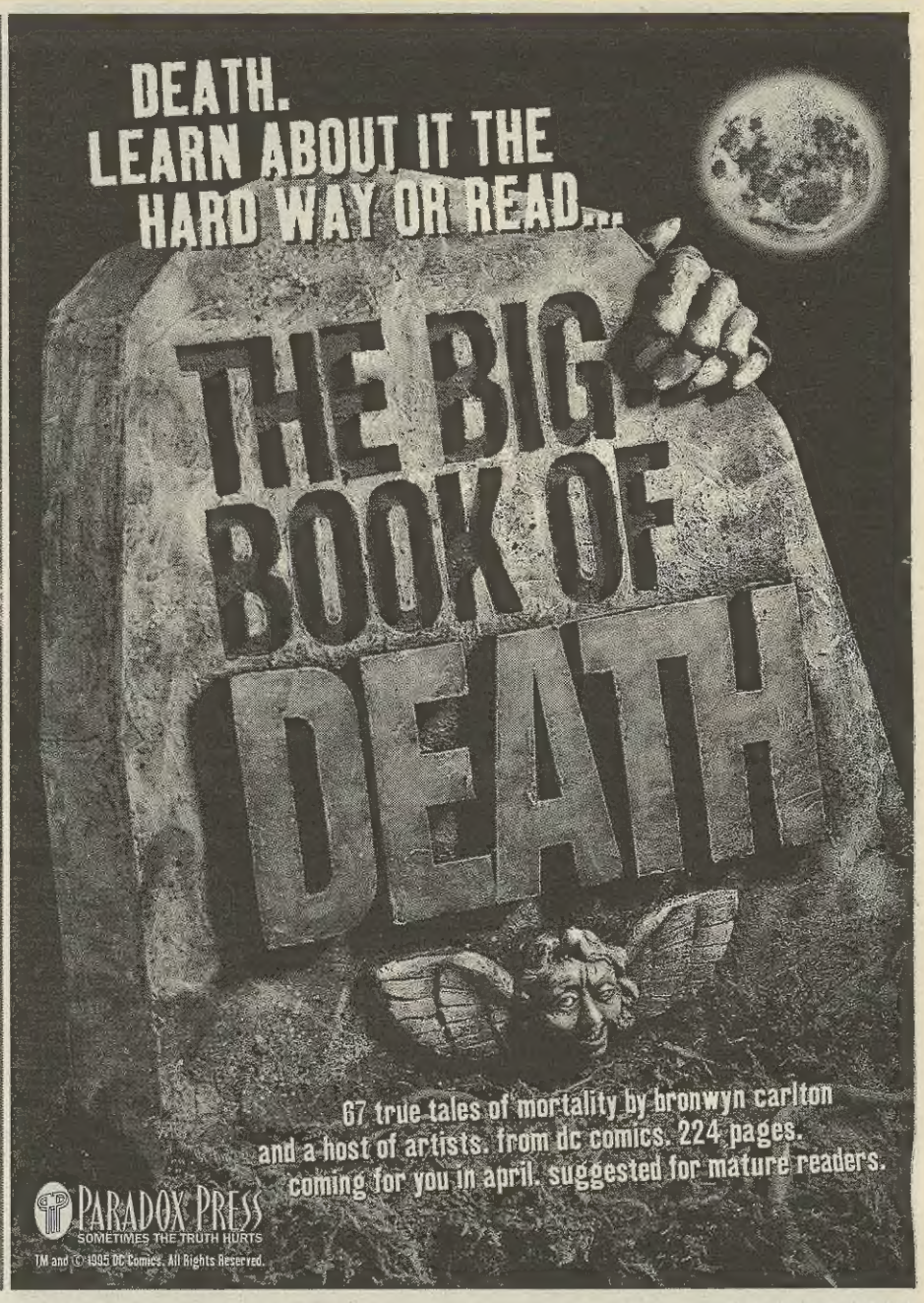
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Bone. *This is one of those rare comics that has just about everything going for it. The one thing that it doesn't have is a bunch of guys in tights beating each other to death page after page—well, it sort of does, but that's the whole parody thing.* ***Hilly Rose's Space Adventures*** *is a comic that will appeal to the older, veteran comics fan. Someone who has seen just about everything that comics have to offer, and doesn't mind a second look.*

But I do think that comics newcomers can enjoy its charm, too. While it's nothing like Bone in content, your Bone comparison is very accurate in communicating some of the tone of this story—and I think that tone will make this book a refreshing change for readers overwhelmed by grim-n-gritty and ultraviolence.

The art by Boyer is joyful. Boyer has a simple clean line style, and tremendous storytelling skills. Again, a comparison with Will Eisner comes to mind. Boyer has that simple ability to convey a feeling or a moment with an action or an expression that most modern comic artists miss.

Hilly Rose's Space Adventures *is simple fun. The story moves at a relatively slow rate for today's comics, but it lets you take in the moments and enjoy them—and I hope that you do take the opportunity to enjoy this terrific book.*

Hilly Rose's Space Adventures #1
Cliff: ★★
Brett: ★★★

Didn't grow up in the early 60's? Didn't have a chance to thrill to those classic Justice League of America stories by Gardner Fox, John Broome, and Mike Sekowsky? If not, don't fret: Roger Stern, Ty Templeton, and Rick Burchett are recreating the experience in ***Superman & Batman Magazine #8*** with an animation-style story that captures all the bygone glory of the original Justice League.

The story is quintessential Silver Age; in 24 pages, Stern manages to retell the origin of every core Justice Leaguer, to individually introduce them to a menace, and to have them combine their skills to overcome that menace. It's the successful formula that made the Silver Age Justice League one of the best superteam books of the era—and Stern proves that there's no reason that formula can't work today.

Superman and Batman Magazine may be targeted for younger readers, but comics veterans are sure to share my enthusiasm for this remarkable story. And it's not just the plot and script that gives this story its punch; Templeton's animation-style artwork still captures the exuberance and the power of these superheroes in a wonderfully effective way. As much as I enjoy the modern Flash, no Flash art in the past couple of years has been as effective for me as Templeton's page-seven panel illustrating the blurred multiple images of Wally West transforming into the Flash and rushing to respond to the Justice League's call for help.

It wasn't just the Flash, it was everybody. Superman rushing past the Batwing to tell Batman that he was on his way to the trouble, right after he got a phone call from him. Everything about the book clicked. (Which just helps my opinion that Roger Stern is one of the most underappreciated writers ever to work in the comics field.)

I second that!...

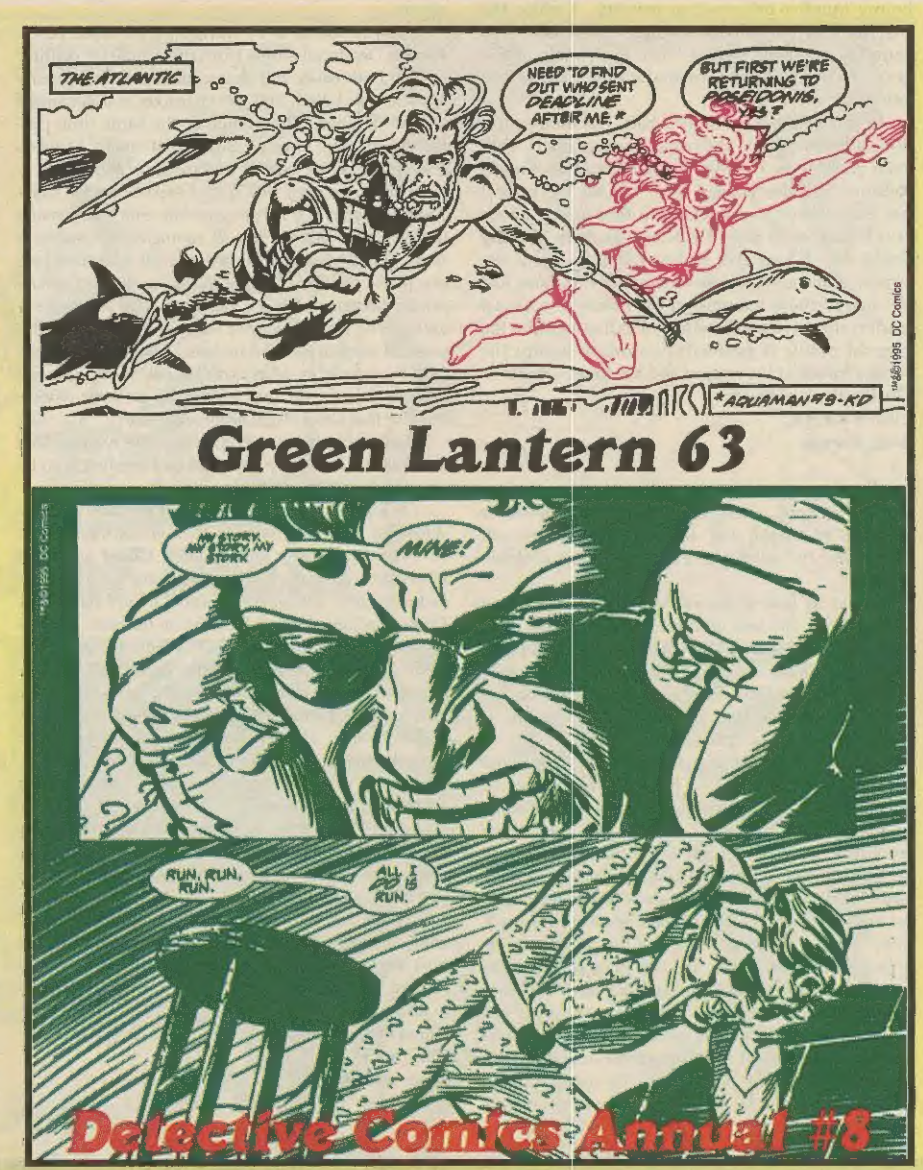
In acknowledgement of the realities of the modern DC Universe that make the present-day Batman seem so out-of-place as a member of a high-profile team like the Justice League, Stern even manages to explain in the final pages why Batman originally joined the group in the first place... and why he chooses to leave it. In a bit over a page, Stern boldly and decisively differentiates the motivations of Superman, Batman, and the rest of the League.

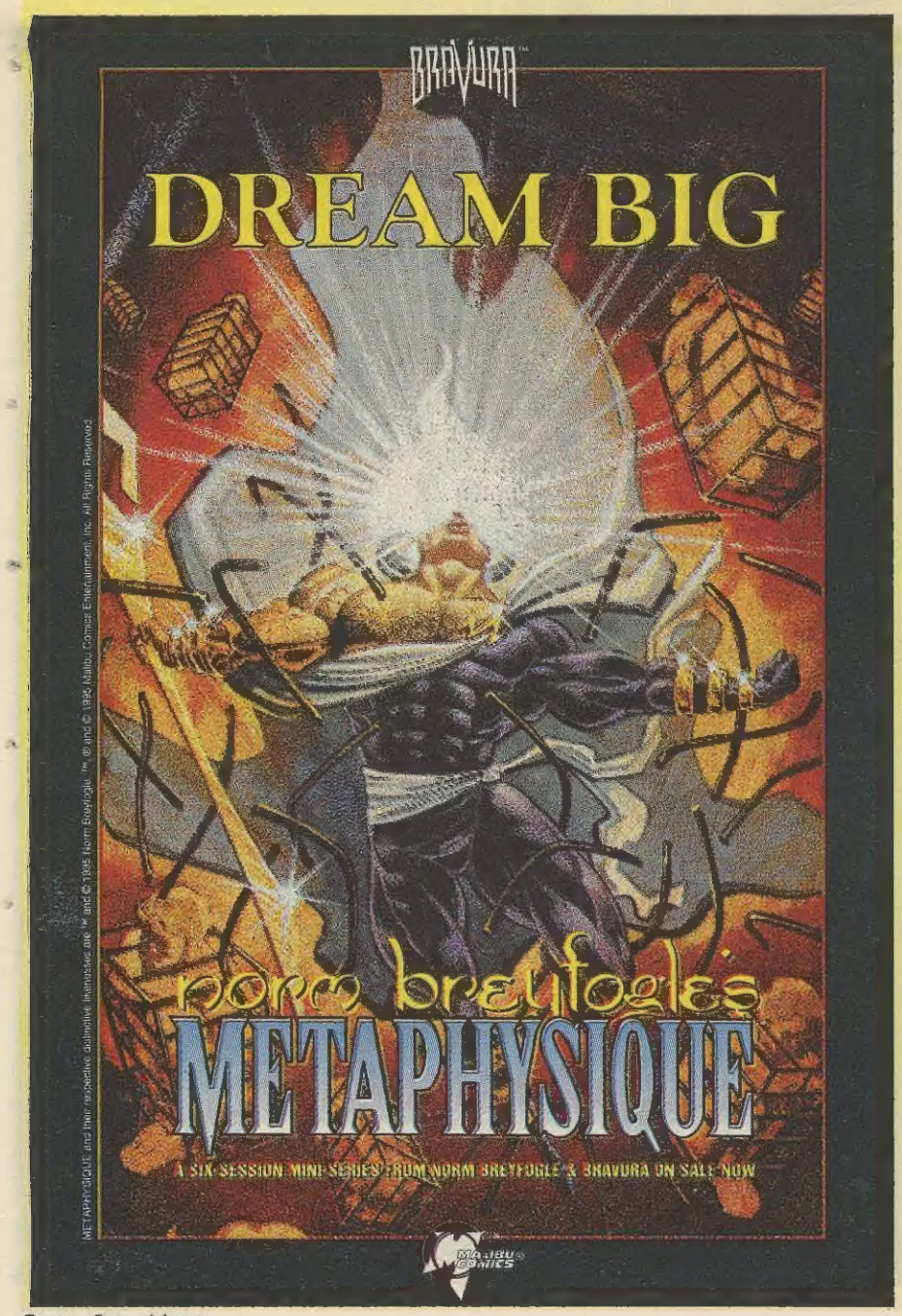
If you've made the mistake of dismissing the animation-style tales of ***Batman Adventures*** and ***Superman & Batman Magazine*** as just kids' stuff, you've made some serious mistakes—but it's not too late to rectify them... and Superman and Batman Magazine #8 is a great place to start!

Superman & Batman Magazine #8
Cliff ★★★★
Brett: ★★★★

Okay, it's truth time. Up until today, I had never read an issue of ***Union*** *from Image comics. It's the truth. I was one of those people that looked at the cover and thought, "another image guy with something on his face...oh well," and kept right on walking. I apologize.*

After reading the xerox copies of ***Union*** *#3, I am ready to go back and pick up the back issues. I can't say what they will be like, but I can say that issue #3 was far more entertaining than I expected it to be. Mike Heisler*


THE ATLANTIC
NEED TO FIND OUT WHO SENT DEADLINE AFTER ME.*
BUT FIRST WE'RE RETURNING TO POSEIDONIS, YES?
*AQUAMAN #9-KD
TM & © 1995 DC Comics
Green Lantern 63
MY STORY, MY STORY, MY STORY
MINE!
RUN, RUN, RUN.
ALL I DO IS RUN.
TM & © 1995 DC Comics
Detective Comics Annual #8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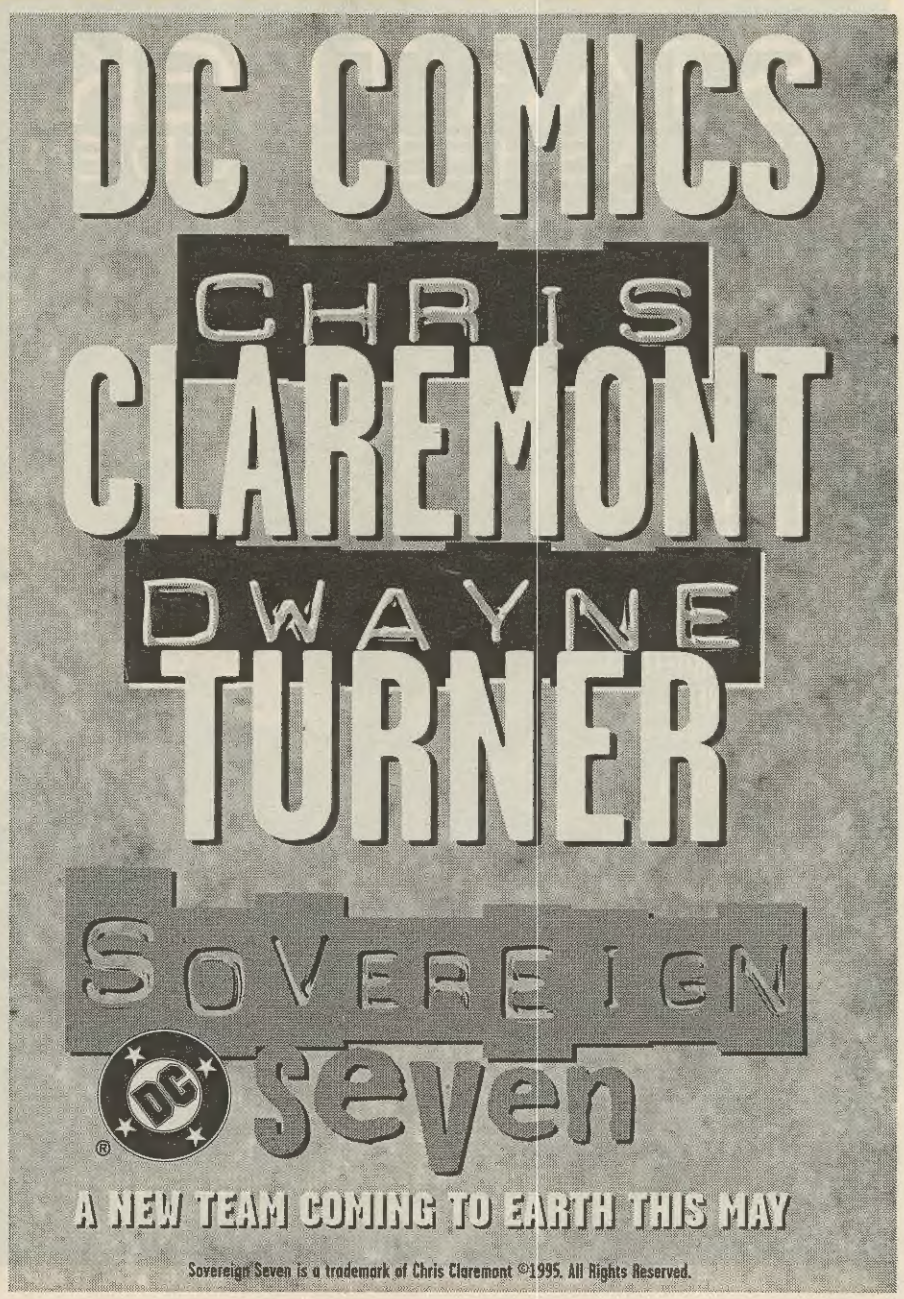


has written a story that seems like it should be standard for every character from another planet who arrives on Earth. Union meets a girl, Union gets money, they go out and spend it. That's really the plot for the issue, but the events are what make it memorable. You rarely get to see someone drink a beer for the first time in a comic book—and subsequently throw it up several beers later. It seems like a slice of life story, and that isn't what I would expect from a spandex clad Image title. It doesn't hurt that Savage Dragon makes an appearance, adding some humor and down to earth qualities for the issue.

The slice-of-life feel of the book was its charm for me; I was pleased to discover a more character-driven story in lieu of a superhero punch-em-out. Some of the comic book stories that I remember most fondly are human interest tales similar to this; I think it helps make the hero more heroic if we have some idea what he does in his time off.

The art by Ryan Benjamin and Tom McWheeney is exactly what you would expect from an Image comic. Everyone looks great. I mean, everyone looks perfect. There is not a physical flaw anywhere in the issue. That's not a bad thing, and these two pull off that Image style very well.

Isn't it intriguing that, in just three years, Image has managed to create a comic book look that almost every other company tries to imitate? While Image doesn't work under the old studio system, where individual credits were unheard of, they have defined the new studio system, where artists work in similar styles to give books a unified look.

I'm really pleased, though, that Image has now decided to focus as much attention on stories as they did on art in the beginning. Readers who haven't read an Image title recently are in for a surprise; the company is aware that fans want books that are fun to read, and that's what they're delivering.

***Union** seems to be one of those titles that will take Image in a stronger direction. This is a character who does things besides complain or beat on bad guys.*

Union #3
Cliff: ★★
Brett: ★★

Did you really think the confrontation between Green Lantern and Parallax was over? No way!...

Green Lantern #63 brings back Parallax... and it's obvious that not only does Hal Jordan not perceive of himself as a villain, but he actually envisions himself as the most noble hero in the DC Universe. Even worse, his self-delusion leads him to cast any superhero who stands in his way as the villain—and of course, he intends to use his identity as the Once and Future Green Lantern to quash that opposition.

*It was horrible to see Hal become the villain of **Zero Hour**, even though it made perfect sense—and a good story. I have heard, far too many times, that Hal just wouldn't have broken from the pressure. He did. I think what people were having trouble accepting is that Hal could turn into a bad guy, but like you said, he doesn't see himself that way. He isn't a bad guy. That tremendous force of will of his has just been turned the wrong way.*

But it's understandable; after all, he had cast himself as the defender of Coast City—and that's the one thing he was absolutely unable to defend. And it's also natural that he's not willing to give up on a plan to make up for his failure; he's back again, and he's convinced that the can still act as Earth's defender.

Hal first returned to the DC Universe in a recent issues of *Green Arrow* (and if you missed it, hunt it down!), but that story was just a preface for what's happening here. Hal Jordan wants his ring back, and he wants Kyle Rayner and Ganthet to recognize him as the legitimate Green Lantern. Neither character is willing to do that, but each has his own way of responding to the situation. Kyle is confrontational, leading to a rematch that no *Zero Hour* fan will want to miss. Ganthet is organizational, putting together a team of heroes who not only know Hal Jordan, but might be able to stand in the way of his goal.

Ron Marz has gotten some flak for his reinterpretation of Green Lantern and for his casting of Hal Jordan as a villainous figure—but as a Green Lantern fan since 1960, I maintain that those criticisms are unfair to Marz as a storyteller. His Hal Jordan Green Lantern is a villainous figure in the same way that Namor was a villain in those early Silver Age Marvel stories: he is a tragic, almost pathetic figure in spite of his great power, driven by an immeasurable loss to use his abilities to try to restore a status quo that simply can't exist.

Exactly. Marz has not only taken Hal out of the picture as a hero, but he has done so in a way that I found believable and palpable. Kyle Rayner has grown into the role of Green Lantern very quickly, and I have come to except him completely. Does that mean I don't want Hal back? Not necessarily, but it does mean that I want to enjoy the story, and I feel that I will be happy with whatever the outcome might be.

Not only is Marz's story powerful and well-crafted, but it offers Darryl Banks a great opportunity to show just how well he can illustrate J'onn J'onnz, Aquaman, Hawkman, the Flash, and Green Arrow. As adept as he is in capturing the personality of these heroes in his artistic interpretations, perhaps he ought to consider doing a superteam book!

Green Lantern #63 is sheer superhero action in an epic sense—but in its struggle with youth versus age, it's not just a mindless punch-em-out.

Green Lantern 63
Cliff: ★★★
Brett: ★★★

*With the newest movie waiting in the wings, it's time for some more of Batman's enemies to take the spotlight. The villains of **Batman Forever** are The Riddler and Two-Face, which means that one of them is being spotlighted in April. Which one? Why is the answer around the curve?*

*Okay, it's the Riddler. Chuck Dixon and Kieron Dwyer team up to bring you the latest version of the beginnings of Edward Nigma in **Detective Comics Annual #8**. This year, all of the DC Annuals are following the Year One theme, and since Batman has already had his spotlight, the Riddler steps in for this issue. Dixon blends the previous versions of the Riddler in his telling of the early adventures. There is the sad and pathetic man crying for attention, and there is the frustrated genius who is looking for an intellectual challenge, both represented in this incarnation of the Riddler. Recent years have made the Riddler out to be a sad, second rate villain, but Dixon takes him beyond that without losing that quality. The Riddler isn't a match for anyone in a fair fight, and he knows it—so he cheats. This Riddler is more devious and cunning than the recent versions, but still retains a bit of that oafishness that was endowed to him by other writers.*

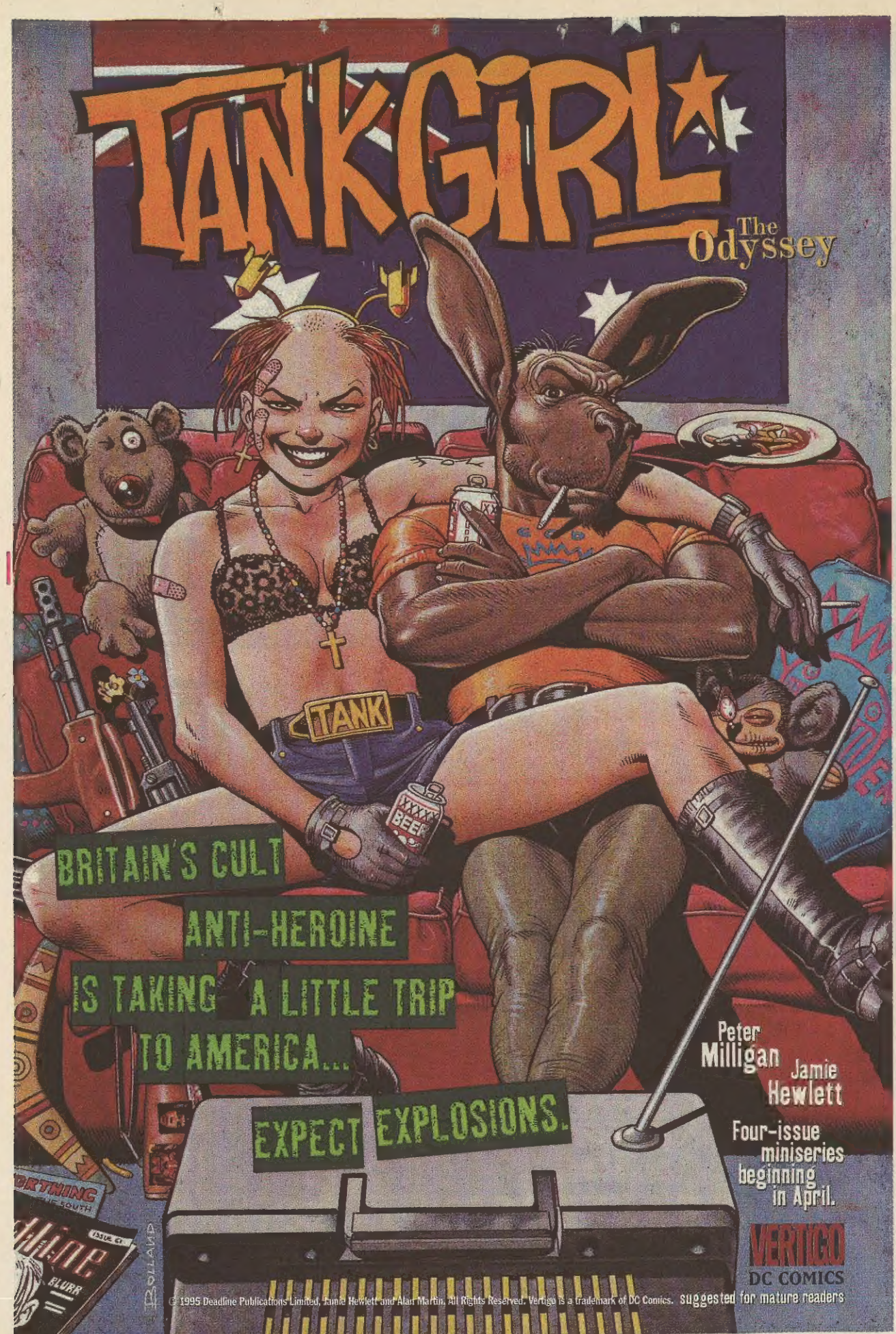
I'll confess that I was mystified when, way back in the 1960's, the Riddler was promoted from second-rate villain status to major adversary. I'd always thought of the Riddler as a Chester Gould sort of villain, an adversary who is little more than a gimmick in human form. Dixon's story helps to establish the Riddler as a more developed character, someone who could actually serve as a worthy adversary for Batman.

Kieron Dwyer's art seems to constantly change. In this issue, he reminds me of Lee Weeks and Dave Mazzuchelli, with just a touch of Bret Blevins thrown in for good measure. Its a nice combination actually, though some of the ink work tends to be a little heavy handed at times.

Mort Meskin. That's whose work I see touches of in Kieron Dwyer's art. I always thought that Meskin was one of the most underrated Golden Age artists—in many ways, he combined the dynamism of Jack Kirby with the graphic sensibilities of Alex Toth—and it's nice to see an artist who can be favorably compared to someone of that caliber.

The Riddler was always one of my favorite villains. I was very disappointed to see him turned into a buffoon that couldn't challenge a rookie cop. It's nice to see that he is working his way back up the ladder to a more serious position—without disregarding what others have said.

Detective Comics Annual #8
Cliff: ★★★
Brett: ★★★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The Odyssey
TANK
XXXX BEER
BRITAIN'S CULT
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IS TAKING A LITTLE TRIP
TO AMERICA...
EXPECT EXPLOSIONS.
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